

Republican Presidential Preliminaries in Iowa—1859-1860

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REPUBLICAN PRESIDENTIAL PRELIMINARIES IN IOWA—1859-1860.

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1. *The First Party Maneuvers in 1859.*

Victory in political contests, as in military operations, depends no less upon the possession of strategic points and the masterful use of the machinery and technique of procedure, than upon concourses of adherents. Inferior forces directed by masters of strategy and tactics are usually successful over preponderant numbers or mere masses unorganized or illy controlled and directed. Candidates or their friends and promoters realize these facts. They begin early to run out their lines, set their stakes, build their fences and hedge against rushes and surprises, to use the jargon of politicians. The leaders in charge of the machinery of the party may ally themselves with this or that wing or faction, or further the interests of a particular candidate; if there seems to be a fair prospect of success they then strive to have the machinery operate in his behalf. Or, they may perceive that the party's choice of a standard bearer is not a matter to be decided solely upon grounds of personal affiliations, or factional or sectional interests but, if victory is to be achieved, such choice must be determined upon considerations insuring the maximum efficiency of the party's forces in the aggregate. Complete alignment, certainty and unity of purpose, capacity for hearty co-operation, prompt co-ordination and concentration whereby a party's strength can be easily directed and hurled against the weak points of the Opposition, are the prerequisites of success. Premature action, however, is no less to be avoided than dilatory measures. The former create serious reactions inimical to candidates because the majority of a party are interested in causes rather than men, and hasty action, such as early rushes to capture caucuses or conventions, suggests "snap

judgments'' and seems to imply that the promoters of a candidate fear adverse results from full, fair and open discussion and deliberate decision.

(a) The Selection of Delegates Proposed.

It cannot now probably be definitely stated when the first maneuvers were instituted for securing the favor of Iowa's Republican leaders or determining the attitude of the party in respect of the presidential succession in 1860. There is some evidence, however, that both friends and promoters of candidates and also some of the party leaders of the State contemplated active measures early in 1859, with a view to controlling the action of Iowa at the national convention.

On March 26th an official call for a Republican state convention to meet in Des Moines, June 22d, was issued by the state central committee. The call, after stating the immediate specific purpose of the convention to be the nomination of candidates for various state offices to be elected at the ensuing election, included the further announcement that—"The convention will take such other action as may, in its opinion, contribute to the success of the principles and organization of the Republican party of this State and of the Union." Of the seven members of the committee signing the call, five were afterwards selected (or as alternates or proxies, acted) as delegates of the party at the Chicago convention. They were Mr. John A. Kasson, chairman, and Mr. H. M. Hoxie, both of Des Moines, Mr. N. J. Rusch of Davenport, Mr. R. L. B. Clarke of Mount Pleasant and Mr. Thomas Seeley of Guthrie Center.

Following within a week or so, word was apparently given out that it would be advisable for the approaching convention to select the delegates to the next national convention, for Mr. Palmer of the *Dubuque Times* observed: "The question has arisen among some of the leading Republicans whether the state convention . . . should not choose delegates to the next Republican national convention. If there is any purpose or any necessity of making the choice at that time, the party throughout the State should know it, that they may be represented accordingly." The reception accorded the sug-

¹Quoted in *The Muscatine Daily Journal*, April 26, 1859.

gestion was somewhat various. Mr. Mahin looked upon it with approval. "We think," he declares, "it would be a fit time to choose such delegates. The call, as published, confers the power on the convention, and as another state convention will not, in all probability, be held before the national convention, the opportunity ought to be improved for the appointment of delegates. Let us have a general expression from the Republican press on this subject, and let it be understood that delegates are to be appointed."¹ The proposition was given more or less approval, *The Cedar Valley Times* concurring with *The Journal*; but for the major part it encountered sharp disapproval.

Mr. Howell repelled the suggestion instantly. "The idea of electing delegates to the national convention," he declared, "ought not to be entertained for a moment. There is no propriety in doing so, nor is there the slightest necessity for such haste. It is highly probable that the national convention will meet at Wheeling on the 17th of June, 1860, and our state convention next year can very properly come off about the first of June, at which time candidates for state offices and delegates to the national convention, duly imbued with the sentiments and fully instructed as to the preferences of the Republicans of Iowa, can be selected."² *The Iowa City Republican* was likewise adverse. Mr. Jerome, the editor, pointed out that "the wish of the party [relative to the candidate] is now unknown. Twelve months hence it will find unanimous expression. The man will come with the hour. Let us wait for both."³ Mr. Drummond reprinted the *Republican's* views as expressing his own.⁴ Mr. Teesdale, while opposing the selection of delegates at the forthcoming Convention, put out the equivocal suggestion that it would be well "to give expression to the sentiment of the State at the time the delegates were selected." One is not certain whether a preliminary expression by the state convention in June was suggested or resolutions of instruction at the time the delegates were later selected was contemplated.⁵

¹*The Muscatine Daily Journal*, April 26, 1859.

²*The Gate City*, April 28, 1859.

³*The Vinton Eagle* cites May 10, 1859. ⁴*Ibid.*

⁵*The Weekly Citizen*, May 11, 1859.

Opinion adverse to either selection of delegates or to an expression of the party's preference in the matter of a candidate was evidently pronounced, for no affirmative action was attempted on the floor of the convention hall at Iowa City, June 22d. Nevertheless we may suspect serious designs. The language of the call already quoted, clearly had some definite proceedings in view. About the same time a similar suggestion was being acted upon with vigor in Oregon. The Republicans of that territory in their convention, April 21, 1859, instructed their delegates, selected at the time for the national convention "to use their influence to secure the nomination of Hon. W. H. Seward of New York, as candidate for President; but in case they cannot secure his nomination, then further proceedings are left to their discretion."¹ Whether the action contemplated by the movers in Iowa was designed to enure to the benefit of Bates or Seward or Cameron we perhaps cannot determine. Nevertheless the friends and promoters of those candidates were already instituting measures to secure the favor and active aid of party leaders in various sections of the country. Taking the personnel of the state central committee as a basis for judgment we may surmise that the design of the movement was favorable to the candidacy of Mr. Bates. Mr. Jerome, one of the signers, as we have seen, was opposed to action. Mr. Clarke, an ardent anti-slavery advocate, almost, if not an out-and-out abolitionist, was one of the staunch Seward men at Chicago the following year. Messrs. Kasson, Hoxie and Seeley were probably favorable to Mr. Bates, rather than Mr. Seward; and Mr. Rusch because of his relations with Mr. Kasson would doubtless have concurred with the colleagues just named; at least Messrs. Kasson and Hoxie gave their votes to Mr. Bates on the first ballot at Chicago.

¹*The Oregon Statesman*, April 26, 1859. The writer is indebted to Mr. George H. Himes, Assistant Secretary and Curator of the Oregon Historical Society of Portland, for the citation above respecting the action of the Republicans of Oregon in 1859.

In view of the instructions given the Oregon delegates, it is interesting that on the first and second ballots in the Convention, Oregon's five votes were cast for Bates, and on the third, four went to Lincoln and one to Seward. See *N. Y. Herald*, May 13, 1860; or *N. Y. Tribune* (s. w.), May 22, 1860.

(b) The Choice of the Convention City and Its Significance.

Meanwhile another maneuver was in progress that was not without influence in determining the party's choice at Chicago. For some time public spirited citizens in the larger cities of the west had been looking with designing eyes upon the members of the Republican national committee and making plans to secure its decision to hold the next national convention in their respective cities. The national Democratic convention in 1856 was held at Cincinnati; and citizens of Wheeling, Indianapolis, Chicago and St. Louis entertained lusty hopes of securing the Republican convention in 1860. From Mr. Howell's assertion previously quoted, it seems that Wheeling was generally accorded the presumption of the selection, but, as the event proved, without warrant. For the most part, of course, the motives animating those seeking the committee's favorable action were the issue of ordinary communal desires to enhance local fame and enjoy the eclat of such national gatherings. But other motives in other minds were probably the decisive factors in determining the selection of the convention city.

Environment is a condition, if not a determinant, of achievement in politics. Local influences may play a conspicuous and on occasion a vital part in the decisions of conventions. The location of the city wherein they are held, if remote from centers of population or difficult of access, may prevent many influential leaders and important elements participating in their deliberations, and thus seriously affect decisions. Moreover, the influences of a community, always numerous, omnipresent and vocal, sometimes subtle and subterranean, under the direction of alert, aggressive and intelligent leaders are often most potent in making things come to pass. They are not always decisive—are seldom the chief factors—unless other forces and considerations are evenly balanced; then local influences when concentrated and co-ordinated may force the tilt of the beam and decide the result.

Any one familiar with the ways of practical politicians to-day need not be told how carefully such matters are attended to by party leaders in closely contested political battles. We

we are told, who was regarded by Clay and Crittenden, Webster and Corwin as a very "adroit politician."¹ After referring to his new editorial duties and his purpose to advocate and pursue a moderate or "conservative" policy relative to national politics he says:

While I shall not war publicly on the extreme ground occupied by some of our friends, I know that Indiana cannot be carried on these grounds and hence the conservative spirit of my paper. I have been battling Democracy in all its infernal phases, for more than thirty years and I want to see it crushed out before I die. It can not be done (in my opinion) if ultra men are permitted to dictate our policy, and name our candidate.

As I suggested to you when we rode on the cars together, it would be a good move to get the national convention held out West somewhere (Indianapolis if you please) so as to be out of the outside influence always created anywhere in the neighborhood of New York—Gov. Lowe of your State, is one of the committee to fix time and place. Please talk with him on this subject.²

Mr. DeFrees' letter reflects a concern lest radicalism should seize the rank and file and force the nomination of an extremist for President who would work the party's defeat in the doubtful states—a concern that one discovers to be pronounced among all the old party wheelhorses in those states. This dread manifested itself in 1859 and 1860 in earnest pleas and in plans for an "Anti-Seward" program rather than in direct, insistent, systematic efforts to push the nomination of a "favorite son" or the favorite of a faction or of a section. Indiana had no candidate, but her population was for the most part composed of people of southern antecedents, affiliations and sympathies (Mr. DeFrees was himself a Tennessean) and the *ultra* notions of the anti-slavery propagandists were received by them with but little favor. Idealistic sentiment, that prompts a party to plunge ahead of the traditions and common sense of the people, or to run counter to popular prejudices, is a rock of offense and not a force making for success. It is clear from Mr. DeFrees' letter that the opponents of Governor Seward must have been canvassing the ad-

¹Appleton's *Cyclopedia of American Biography*, Vol. II, p. 124.
²James Harlan, *Autobiographical Manuscript*, p. 3043. For permission to cite and use the letter above the writer is indebted to Mr. and Mrs. Robert T. Lincoln of Chicago, and to Dr. B. F. Shambaugh of the State Historical Society of Iowa, and Mr. Johnson Brigham, State Librarian, the latter having the manuscript in their custody.

visability of securing the convention in a western city some time prior to the date of his letter. The significance of his attitude and the importance of the maneuver in contemplation, are effectively stated by Senator Harlan himself, who, on rereading it some thirty-five years later, made the following comment: ". . . He, as he says, was an Old School Whig prior to the organization of the Republican party, and as sternly opposed to every thing bordering on 'abolitionism' as the slave-holding element of the Southern States. So were nearly all of the leaders of the Republican party in Indiana. And he and they had already commenced to put up fortifications against the possible nomination of Wm. H. Seward, as the Republican candidate for President in 1860. And Mr. Seward was probably defeated by this influence in the national convention; supplemented, of course, by sympathizers from other western States."¹

The national committee had the matter of the selection of the convention city under advisement for a considerable time. In April the citizens of Wheeling presented a memorial to the committee seeking a decision favorable to that city.² On May 25th, the committee met at Albany, New York, and although some twenty members were present, no decision as to time and place could be reached. The report made via the dispatches read—"The proceedings are strictly private but it is thought the decision will be in favor of holding the convention at St. Louis, Mo., or some other place in Virginia."³ Evidently at that time, either representatives of the west or anti-Seward members outnumbered the Seward members of the committee. The matter hung fire for some time. In the latter part of the year the subject was "agitated in different localities," St. Louis, Chicago and Indianapolis being "the most prominent places named."⁴ The press in Iowa does not appear to have paid much attention to the question. One editor, however, expressed a decided preference. Mr. Jerome declared in favor of Chicago as his first choice, of St. Louis as his second and of

¹*Ib.* p. 3049. For the prominent part played by Mr. DeFrees at the Chicago Convention see McClure's *Our Presidents*, etc., pp. 155-156.

²*The Express and Herald* (Dubuque), April 19, 1859.

³*The Daily Hawk-Eye*, May 26, 1859.

⁴*St. Charles Intelligencer*, Dec. 15, 1859.

Indianapolis as his third choice.¹ The decision was not made until December 22d following. The committee met in New York City. The part taken by Iowa in the meeting is not certain. Governor Lowe had ceased to be a member. His place had been filled by Mr. Andrew J. Stevens, a banker and broker of Des Moines, who was then or later, an advocate of Governor Seward's nomination. At the time of the meeting of the committee he could not attend, his proxy and vote being held and exercised by Senator J. R. Doolittle of Wisconsin.² Mr. Judd of Illinois concurred naturally in the action of the committee and he was no doubt one of the effective promoters of the movement making for the decision, but it would appear that he was only one of many conspiring to secure the benefit of local environment adverse to the candidacy of the Senator from New York.

The contrariety of minds relative to the significance of the action of the committee is illustrated in an interesting and significant fashion in the editorial comments of two editors of opposite political faith. Mr. Jerome of Iowa City expressed himself as follows: ". . . we think it eminently fit that a city which has maintained her republicanism amidst such opposition, 'bearding the Douglas in his den,' richly deserves this flattering testimonial. Chicago herself is a true type and representative of the already great and growing Republican party . . . She is emphatically a *free* city. Her merchants are not satellites and flunkies—they do not, as Philadelphia and some other cities have done, propose to sell their principles with their goods. Political auctions have not, and we trust never will, come into vogue with her people."³ The work of Douglas' opponent evidently was the matter in mind. Mr. F. M. Zieback of Sioux City observed: "The selection of this hotbed of abolitionism as the place for holding their convention will not do much towards enhancing the prospect of Republicanism among the more conservative portion of the party. It is a stroke of policy, however, on the part of the friends of Lincoln which will doubtless place him upon the

¹*Iowa City Weekly Republican*, Dec. 7, 1859.

²*N. Y. Tribune (s. w.)*, Dec. 23, 1859.

³*Iowa Weekly Republican*, December 28, 1859.

ticket for Vice-President."¹ Clearly up in the farthestmost corner of the State, Abraham Lincoln was not "an Unknown," nor was he regarded as a negligible quantity in the political contest then approaching its crisis. The significance of Mr. Zieback's comment is not lessened by the fact that he was a Democrat.

(c) Call for the Special State Convention.

Meantime, about two weeks preceding the determination of the date and place for holding the national Republican convention a call was issued December 5, by the state central committee, for a special Republican state convention to be held in Des Moines, January 18, 1860, to choose delegates to the national convention. The matter was under consideration during November, Mr. Hildreth, a member of the committee, tells us.² Mr. John A. Kasson who, as chairman, signed the call, says therein that it was issued in "accordance with the general expression of public sentiment." The justification for the assembly so many months before the national convention was put upon two grounds. First the national convention "would be held at a much earlier date than is usually appointed for calling a state convention for the nomination of state officers," and second, it was "most convenient to procure a general representation of counties during the session of the legislature."³

As the Republicans of nearly all of the northern or free states did not call their state conventions until the next year was well advanced toward the date set for the national convention, one cannot repress some curiosity respecting the real reasons for not thus waiting in this instance. The postponement for two months would still have enabled members of the state legislature to serve as delegates from their respective counties. There is more than the shadow of a reason for thinking that another consideration besides the selection of delegates to the Chicago convention might have been in the minds of some of the members of the state central committee

¹*The Register*, Dec. 31, 1859.

²*St. Charles Intelligencer*, Nov. 24, 1859.

³*Ib.*, Dec. 22, 1859.

when they concurred in calling the special convention for January 18th.

The term of Iowa's senior Senator, James Harlan, was about expiring. His successor was to be chosen by the legislature which was to convene in Des Moines, January 9. Senator Harlan desired re-election and his renomination by his party was generally assumed and conceded. Nevertheless, there were sundry, and not a few either, who did not favor his re-election enthusiastically. Some, perhaps, because of personal reasons, such as discontent with his course at Washington: some because of his "locality"—his home Mt. Pleasant was a short distance from Burlington, the home of his colleague, James W. Grimes: some because they were not unwilling to succeed him if chance might offer. Senator Harlan's friends in various parts of the State detected signs of attempts at the furtherance of the senatorial ambition of some of the party leaders and in some anxiety warned him of the fact.¹ In the middle of December political circles were stirred by an editorial in *The Nonpareil* of Council Bluffs in which Mr. Maynard plumply protested against the assumption that Mr. Harlan had any claim to be his own successor that the party or the people were in honor bound to recognize; rather, the members of the general assembly should canvass men regardless of particular services or sacrifices and select the best man. Mr. Dunham of *The Daily Hawk-Eye* endorsed the sentiments with considerable emphasis.²

If there was any design adverse to Senator Harlan's re-election to the national Senate in the date fixed for the state convention it was conceived in the hope that the concurrence of the convention with the opening of the general assembly might produce a situation favorable to serious disturbances in the alignment of the Senator's forces. The selection of the speaker of the lower house engenders frequently intense feeling among the rival aspirants. The assignment of members to committees in the respective houses and the appointment of the various clerks and state officers by the legislative caucus, often produces furious animosities and the acids

¹Autobiographical MSS.

²*The Daily Hawk-Eye*, Dec. 26, 1859.

of disappointed hopes may cause all sorts of reactionary movements whereby enemies and rivals may secure benefits. If such hopes were indulged the desire of many to attend the national convention at Chicago as delegates would increase the trading stock of those who sought thus to manipulate the situation. Whatever the design might have been it was futile, for Senator Harlan was re-elected without dissent from his own party workers.

The call for the convention elicited but a few comments or suggestions. Indeed one is likely to suffer from surprise at the general indifference and non-attention to the work it was designed to accomplish. Sundry facts may explain the popular inattention. Congress met for the most momentous session in its history. The President's message contained references and recommendations that were as firebrands thrown into a tinder box. The deadlock over the election of the Speaker, the hubbub created by congressional endorsement of Helper's *Impending Crisis*, and the denunciation and recrimination resulting from the attack on Harper's Ferry—all these matters and others absorbed public attention to the exclusion of most local matters. There were, however, a few expressions worth noting, for they illustrate again with force and point the general attitude urged by prudent party leaders as the appropriate course for the party to pursue in selecting its representatives, and their proper procedure in selecting the party's standard bearer for the campaign to ensue.

Mr. Teesdale briefly commends the date fixed for the convention for the reason assigned in the call and emphasizes the urgent need for a large representation from all counties so that the "true sentiment of the State" may be faithfully reflected by the men selected to go to Chicago. He asserts that "nothing but the wildest imprudence and folly on the part of the Republican national convention, can prevent the election of a Republican President and Vice-President in 1860. In order to insure wise action in the national body, the action of the state body must be judicious and wise; the success of the cause being the paramount consideration."¹

¹The Iowa Weekly Citizen, Dec. 14, 1859.

From one newspaper not heretofore cited came an editorial worthy particular attention for its significance and suggestions. Among the accessions to the ranks of the Republican party in the campaign of 1859 was Mr. Henry P. Scholte of Pella, the city founded in 1846 under his guidance by a body of Dutch Pilgrims, emigrants from Holland because of religious persecution. Although not always dominant in its communal life he was until his death unquestionably its most influential citizen. On coming to this country his antagonism to strong central government caused him to affiliate with the Democratic party. Its attitude toward foreigners further encouraged him. On the subject of Slavery he was a stout opponent of the system, but followed Henry Clay in maintaining the rights of owners of slaves against the attacks of abolitionists.¹ The repeal of the Missouri Compromise and the Kansas-Nebraska bill distressed him greatly but he did not join the Republicans in 1856 because of the "impression that Know-Nothingism and Abolitionism were the predominant consideration in its councils."² The scandal in connection with the Lecompton constitution in Kansas was too much for him and he joined the Republicans in the spring or early summer of 1859. His change of party faith made a considerable disturbance because of his great influence in Pella where he had long guided the majority in political discussion by means of *The Pella Gazette*, which he both published and edited.³ On reading the call for the special convention he expressed himself in the following editorial entitled "Presidential Candidates":

Several states will present candidates for President and Vice-President at the next national Republican convention. We have no doubt but the Republicans of Iowa will heartily sustain the nominees of that convention. Iowa will send her delegates, but has not, at present, to propose one of her sons as a candidate. We think it, therefore, not expedient for Republican papers in Iowa to propose,

¹*American Slavery in reference to the Present Agitation in the United States By an Adopted Citizen.* This rare and interesting book consists of editorials on the subject written by Mr. Scholte for *The Pella Gazette* between June 7, 1855, and November 8, 1856. The writer is under obligations to Hon. Henry L. Bousquet, Clerk of the Supreme Court, and Mr. Henry Scholte of Pella for the privilege of examining both the book and the files of *The Gazette*.

²*The Pella Gazette*, August 10, 1859.

³*Ib.*, Dec. 14, 1859.

at present, any name as their particular choice, but at least wait till we have had our state convention to elect delegates to the national convention. Should our state convention deem it proper and necessary to instruct their delegates to go for any one of the main candidates then there will be some propriety in the Republican papers advocating the claims of such candidates. But, if on the contrary, our state convention deems it proper not to give such instructions but give to the delegates power to cast their vote in the national convention for such candidates as they shall there discover to be the strongest men, we think it best then for the Republican papers in Iowa to await the national convention, and when the nomination is there perfected to hoist the names of those candidates at the head of their column and then work faithfully and earnestly till we have gained the victory next November. We consider such a course best for the Republican party and for the candidates nominated at the national convention.

Here again we have prudence urging cautious and conservative conduct. Politics is an eminently practical matter. Success depends no less upon rapid adjustments to conditions than upon the possession of forces and supporters: and conditions are usually confused and confusing, shifting with kaleidoscopic facility and profusion. The editorial has added interest from the fact that the convention soon to convene at Des Moines selected Mr. Scholte as one of the party's delegates at large to the national convention; and his course fulfilled his own advice.

This narrative of developments in 1859 may fittingly close with an excerpt from one of Iowa's great party leaders to another party chieftain then about to enter upon a distinguished career in our State and national history—both men masters of the tactics and strategy of politics. The letter was written to Governor-elect Kirkwood by Senator James W. Grimes, and was dated at Washington, D. C., December 26, 1859. It aptly and adequately reflects and summarizes the attitude of the party leaders and of the rank and file of the Republican party in Iowa towards the nomination of their candidate for President.

DEAR KIRKWOOD:

The State Convention soon assembles to appoint delegates to the Chicago convention. Do not let the delegates be instructed and

send men who are not mere traders in politics. You ought to be one of the delegates and I hope you will see to it that you are appointed. I would select a goodly number to cast the vote of Iowa.

If you appoint electors I would suggest Samuel Miller of Keokuk and Wilson of Fairfield. They are both efficient canvassers and would help our congressional and state candidates a good deal. We must have a thorough canvass of the State next year and bring our majority up to six or eight thousand. Have good men appointed delegates and have them divided fairly between old Whigs and old Democrats, and entirely uncommitted to any man or men, who will try to nominate for the good of the party and not for the benefit of themselves.

Yours,

JAMES W. GRIMES.¹

The Samuel Miller referred to was Samuel F. Miller afterwards appointed by President Lincoln Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court. The "Wilson of Fairfield" was James F. Wilson, then rapidly rising in state fame in the state legislature, who as one of Iowa's delegates at the Chicago convention, worked from first to last for the nomination of Abraham Lincoln for President and afterwards had a distinguished career in both houses of Congress.

¹*Correspondence of Gov. Sam'l J. Kirkwood* in Aldrich Collection, in Historical Department of Iowa at Des Moines.

Those familiar with the history of Iowa and of Congress will appreciate the warrant for Senator Grimes' assertion that Mr. Jas. F. Wilson was an "efficient" canvasser; but few will realize its fitness in the case of Mr. Samuel F. Miller. All chroniclers refer to his reputation as a cogent and powerful pleader at the bar of his county and of the Supreme Court of Iowa; but no one refers, so far as the writer knows, to his strength in the popular forum. Inquiry of General John W. Noble of St. Louis, who practiced in the same courts with Mr. Miller from 1855 to 1862 elicited the information that in public debate "he was superbly aggressive both in argument and in gesture and voice; and he flinched not at any conclusion to which his premises logically lead him." In the campaign of 1860 he threw himself with "that energy and intellectual force of which he possessed so much, and he was as daring a leader in debate as he would have been in a cavalry charge. . . ." General Noble then relates Mr. Miller's discussion with Judge J. M. Love at Keokuk of the issues of that campaign and the fears of Disunion in case Mr. Lincoln was elected and the dramatic and thrilling rejoinder of Mr. Miller, particularly when, with intense feeling, he said, "Sir, if these principles when duly adopted by the people of the United States, because distasteful to a minority, whether North or South, may lead to conflict of arms, I, for one, will abide the issue. I, for one, would rather see, if see I must, bayonets crossed over the ballot box, than not to have the ballot's decree carried into effect, even by the whole force of my country's power." The effect was "electric." Letter of General John W. Noble to the writer, St. Louis, Mo., February 17, 1910.

2. *The First Party Decision in 1860.*

When Iowans began their reckonings in January, 1860, the surface of the waters exhibited but few signs of strenuous activity in state or national politics. There was no uproar, and no general fuss, as the forces and factors contending for power and places were not concentrating sufficiently so that partisan passions and factional prejudices upheaved in foam and fury; but here and there commotion was considerable, for the currents were running with vigor. We must appreciate somewhat the nature, velocity and momentum of the major currents in order to realize the conditions under which the Republicans of Iowa made their first substantial decision in determining their attitude towards party principles, procedure and candidates in the presidential contest of 1860.

(a) Contrary Considerations Affecting Party Interests.

The Legislature of Iowa was due to assemble at Des Moines in regular session, January 9th, and all classes contemplated its sessions with miscellaneous hopes and fears—all parties conceded that it would be one of the "most important sessions ever held in this state."¹ The Republicans had complete possession of all the offices of the State, executive, judicial and legislative. Their leaders represented the State in both houses of Congress. They held their supremacy by a narrow margin, however, the campaign of 1859 taxing their strength to the uttermost. The problems and perplexities of the party leaders when the chiefs began to ingather at the state capital for the inauguration of Governor-elect Samuel J. Kirkwood, were numerous and pressing.

The friends and guardians of the "Maine" law, prohibiting the sale of intoxicating beverages, were greatly incensed at the progressive imbecility in its administration, due to the insertion of "wine and beer" clauses and the elastic interpretations of "mechanical, medicinal and sacramental" purposes in the law's exemptions. They insisted upon drastic strengthening, while the enemies of the law—the Germans

¹*The Dubuque Herald*, January 4, 1860.

preeminently—belligerently demanded radical relief from its irksome provisions. The foreign born in the State—and here again the Germans chiefly—were uneasy and exhibited a bellicose temperament. Both the outgoing Governor in his message and the incoming Governor in his inaugural address urged the passage of a “Registry Law” which all knew would mainly and immediately affect aliens adversely, and they, mindful of the “Two Year Amendment” in Massachusetts in 1859, were very suspicious and insistent upon marked consideration. The situation was more forcefully than politely described in the reported remark of a Republican editor, who said: “To get an office at the hands of the Legislature, a man must be born again—born in Germany by G———!”¹

But for the most part, anxieties and ambitions anent finance and commerce animated the public mind. Industry after much blood-letting, was recovering with painful slowness from the severe depression following in the wake of the panic of 1857, the worst effects of which were not felt in Iowa until 1859.² Resulting in considerable measure therefrom, the finances of the State were in a bad way. Public accounts in city, county and state administrations were generally in sorry confusion and charges of malversation and misappropriation were common. The school funds of the State were particularly thus affected—interest thereon to the amount of \$120,000—an enormous amount at that time—being in default at the time Governor Lowe sent in his message to the Legislature, January 10th. The State, county and city treasuries were all seriously embarrassed by deficits due to delinquent taxes and local discussion was highly charged with the bitter animosities issuing from “tax sales” and resulting ouster of delinquents. But banks and railroads engaged the major interests of the public.

From 1838 to 1858, Iowa had virtually denied herself banks of note issue. The inconvenience and distress resulting secured a constitutional amendment in 1857 that permitted the establishment of the State Bank of Iowa in 1858. Its organization,

¹*Daily Iowa State Journal*, January 16, 1860.

²Gov. R. P. Lowe, *Message to Senate and House of Representatives*, January 10, 1860.

or rather the organization of its branches, progressed amidst some misadventure that was greatly magnified by reason of the general industrial depression. Just when business was getting righted, commercial confidence, particularly in eastern central Iowa, suffered a violent shock on December 16, 1859, from the failure of a prominent banking house of Davenport. That institution was the chief sponsor of the notes of a notorious "wild cat" bank located at Florence, Nebraska—one of the members of the firm being a director of the branch of the State Bank at Davenport.¹ Then, as now, private bankers were alert and aggressive in furthering their interests and their secret caucuses aroused popular prejudices.² Cries of "monopoly" and broad hints of fell designs among the money changers and "note shavers" were common, and these gained much credence among the discontented when Governor Lowe in his message, declared his hostility to "Free Banks," and recommended that the notes of the State Bank be made legal tender for taxes and its branches fiscal agents of the State and counties.

Railroads, however, comprised the greatest complex of interests that induced the public to concentrate its attention upon the Legislature in January, 1860. Then as now, these powerful agencies stirred the animosities and ambitions of politicians and public alike, for their promoters had to appeal to and utilize the law and ordinance making and taxing bodies of the State. In previous years railroad projects had been promoted with feverish and reckless haste. Counties and cities had run riot in authorizing bond issues and tax levies for railroads. Charges of corrupt practices in connection therewith were not infrequent. In 1856 extensive land grants had been given four companies to expedite the completion of projected lines. They failed to fulfill their promises. Popular expectations were sadly disappointed and public discussion was rife with demands for the annulment of the contracts and the cancellation of the grants. The dissatisfaction became so resentful that repudiation, or attempts thereat, became common and innumerable lawsuits were instituted to

¹*Davenport Gazette*, cited in *The Gate City*, December 23, 1859.

²*The Dubuque Herald*, January 11, 1860.

enforce or to enjoin the issue of bonds or the spreading and collection of tax levies in aid of railroads. In December, 1859, the Supreme Court of Iowa declared invalid a bond issue of Scott county wherein Davenport is situate.¹ Nevertheless, many communities ardently sought railroad connections and strove to secure the forfeited grants of the defaulting companies, and the holders of their stocks and bonds naturally desired to realize something from their holdings. All parties—protesting taxpayers and railroad builders—looked to the General Assembly for relief.² Rumors were soon afloat that railroad promoters expected to “send down to Des Moines this winter a strong ‘lobby’ of hired ‘constitutional lawyers’ for the purpose of operating upon the Legislature.”³ Mr. J. B. Grinnell, himself an ardent promoter of railroad enterprises in those days, wrote the *St. Louis Republican*, a week or so before the General Assembly met that “the State Aid question promises to arise in Iowa at the meeting of the Legislature,” an assertion that aroused adverse suspicion and inquiries, “Who are the managers? Whose plan is to be followed?”⁴

With local conditions thus exceedingly difficult for political leaders either to control easily or to deal with safely, the atmosphere was made electric by sundry matters of national moment that then crowded to the fore. Iowa and Iowans were more closely connected with John Brown’s raid into Virginia and his attack on Harper’s Ferry than either law or ethics justified. The villages of Tabor and Springdale had been rendezvous for his band prior to the foray. At least three

¹*Stokes v. County of Scott*, 10 Ia. Sup. Ct. Reports, 166.

²The intense feelings and subterranean currents are suggested in a series of resolutions adopted at Nevada, in Story county, at a Mass Convention of the citizens of that county, January 7th, in which the failure of the Iowa Central Air Line to complete its contract is denounced, the ability and intentions of the Dubuque, Marion and Western R. R. Co. are denied, and the Cedar Rapids and Missouri R. R. Co. is commended to the Legislature and the transfer thereto of the land grants asked. The latter road enjoyed their confidence “backed, as it is, by two powerful railroad organizations, and composed of our own citizens, in connection with eastern capitalists, who have already built, without any aid from the government, the longest line of railroad in the State.” The convention by the same resolutions “instructed” their Senator and Representative in the Legislature “to use all honorable means to secure” the desired transfer of the land grant in question. (*Daily Iowa State Journal*, January 14, 1860.)

³*Dubuque Herald*, November 20, 1859.

⁴*The Daily Iowa State Journal*, January 9, 1860. Mr. Grinnell was a Director of the Chicago and Rock Island Railroad (or the old M. & M. R. R., more probably) prior to 1860; at least the position he tells us, was tendered him by Mr. Henry Farnam, then President of the Company.—*Men and Events of Forty Years*, 298.

Iowans, Jeremiah Anderson, Brown's "faithful henchman,"¹ and the brothers, Barclay and Edwin Coppoc, took part in the raid. Soon after Brown's capture the dispatches announced that among Brown's papers were found letters of two prominent Republican leaders of Iowa, namely Mr. Wm. Penn Clarke of Iowa City, and Mr. Josiah B. Grinnell of Grinnell, the former then the reporter for the Supreme Court and the latter a state Senator; and suspicious partisans of the "Administration" charged that the correspondence was incriminating.² On December 16, 1859, the "Select Committee" of the Senate of which Senator John M. Mason of Virginia was chairman and Jefferson Davis of Mississippi was a potent member, began its inquiry into the "invasion;" and on January 5, 1860, its hearings began at Washington and some of Iowa's citizens expected summons to appear at the inquisition to tell what they knew of the "aid and comfort" given the conspirators at Tabor, Des Moines, Grinnell, Iowa City, Springdale and Davenport.³ Coincident with the latter proceedings Governor John Letcher of Virginia issued (Jan. 10) a requisition on the Chief Executive of Iowa for the apprehension of Barclay Coppoc, a fugitive from justice in Virginia, the misjoinder of which two weeks later produced one of the dramatic episodes of those stirring days—explosions in the Legislature and a ringing message in rejoinder from Governor Kirkwood.

Into this highly charged atmosphere came Governor Kirkwood's inaugural address, delivered (Jan. 11) in person to the General Assembly. Three-fifths of his discourse was devoted to national issues—John Brown and Harper's Ferry, Slavery and Colonization. Brown's course the new chief magistrate of Iowa condemned "unqualifiedly," not only as "unlawful" but wrong and reprehensible and destructive of law and order. Nevertheless he at the same time roundly de-

¹Frank B. Sanborn, *Recollections of Seventy Years*, I, 163.

²*The Dubuque Herald*, November 8, 1859—Correspondence from Burlington, Iowa. See also Grinnell *ib.*, p. 218.

³*Report of The Select Committee of the Senate Appointed to Inquire into the Late Invasion and Seizure of the Public Property at Harper's Ferry*, etc., pp. 27, 28.

Mr. J. B. Grinnell attended on summons at Washington but was not called before the Committee to testify. See his *Men and Events of Forty Years*, pp. 218, 219.

nounced Presidents Pierce and Buchanan, charging that they by tortuous courses "sowed the wind" in Nebraska and Kansas, and the South was reaping the whirlwind in Virginia; on their shoulders Kirkwood laid the sole responsibility for Brown's "unlawful invasion" of the Old Dominion. As with the lightning's flash—the inaugural was followed by tremendous thunder and reverberation. The Democrats returned with furious denunciation of its sentiments. Mr. J. B. Dorr, their most influential editor pronounced its doctrines "infamous."¹ The Democrats of the lower house of the legislature filed a solemn formal protest against its deliverance and against its publication and distribution at public expense, declaring its statements mere dicta and grossly inappropriate as well as unwarranted, palliating lawlessness that directly assailed the integrity of the national union.² It was the violence of feeling thus created that later produced the disturbances anent Kirkwood's refusal to honor Governor Letcher's requisition for Barclay Coppoe just mentioned.

Amidst such a complex of counter currents the Legislature convened: and delegates to the special Republican state convention began to assemble in Des Moines.

Foremost in the minds of party leaders and workers was the fact that a Senator of the United States had to be elected, the term of Senator James Harlan then nearing completion. This contingency, as all familiar with state politics know, is the alpha and omega of the personal political ambitions

¹*The Dubuque Herald*, January 15. 1860.

²See *Journal of House of Representatives* (8th G. A.) for dates mentioned for the Address and the Protest.

Governor Kirkwood's denunciation of Brown's conduct as hostile to good government had been antedated by another prominent Iowan on the floor of the House of Representatives at Washington. Col. Sam'l R. Curtis of Keokuk, represented the First Congressional District, comprising then the south half of Iowa. Repelling a bold innuendo that the Republicans were urging a candidate for Speaker who endorsed murder, Colonel Curtis on December 24, 1859, pronounced Brown's invasion of Virginia at Harper's Ferry "an outrage." (Cong. Globe, 36 Cong. 1st Ses., Vol. I-241.) Later, January 4, 1860, in the course of a colloquy with Reagan of Texas, Cobb of Alabama, and Craig of Missouri, Colonel Curtis declared Brown's previous robbery of the nine slaves from Missouri and spiriting them through Iowa "a more flagrant violation of law, and more important in its character and results than the foray which he made into Virginia." (*Ib.*, pp. 331-2.)

and finesse in American commonwealths. Then as now "King Caucus" ruled supreme. On Saturday, Sunday and Monday the lobbies of the hotels of Des Moines swarmed with political leaders and their henchmen, with legislators and candidates for offices, both great and small, with their friends and aids in attendance—all in a tremendous buzz.¹ Monday night (Jan. 9) party caucuses selected the clerks, doorkeepers, firemen, pages and postmaster for the Senate and the lower House. The ardent desires of the innumerable candidates for these petty offices were potentially dangerous forces when disappointed by the decisions of the caucus; for these aspirants possess power in the provinces and may influence greatly their senators and representatives in determining their course in matters of greater moment. In the election of the Speaker of the House of Representatives and in the apportionment of the chairmanships of committees and membership therein such petty considerations play no small part and the course of the Legislature on all important matters is thereby determined.

At Des Moines, as at Washington, the office of Public Printer was an alluring prize. One of Senator Harlan's strongest friends, Mr. John Teesdale, editor of *The Iowa Weekly Citizen*, had held the office since 1856. He desired a third term and deemed himself entitled to the honor. Two other influential republican editors were ambitious to secure the emoluments of the office—Messrs. James B. Howell of *The Gate City* of Keokuk and Mr. Frank W. Palmer of *The Dubuque Times*.² The fates decided in favor of the latter, and the candidacy of Senator Harlan for re-election to the National Senate had some part in the decision. From the time of his first election to that body in 1855, republican leaders in the north half

¹*Iowa City Republican*, January 11, 1860.—Editorial Correspondence from Des Moines, dated January 7th.

²There were other active or "receptive" candidates for the place mentioned besides those referred to above: Messrs. John Mahin of *The Daily Muscatine Journal*, G. H. Jerome of *The Iowa City Republican*, J. G. Davenport of *The Times of Cedar Rapids*, and Alfred Sanders of *The Daily Davenport Gazette*. (Capitol Corr. of *The Gate City*, January 11, 1860, and *The Daily Iowa State Journal*, January 10, 1860.) Mr. Mahin apparently did not desire the office seriously for he states that Mr. Teesdale's "most prominent competitor" was Mr. Howell of *The Gate City*, "the oldest and most efficient newspaper conductor in the state." (Capitol Corr. in *Daily Muscatine Journal*, January 11, 1860.)

of the State had demanded a like honor for one of their leaders, and had constantly fanned local prejudices with that end in view. Party leaders at Dubuque were foremost in urging the election of a northern man. Despite their powerful pressure Governor James W. Grimes, a near neighbor of Mr. Harlan, was elected as his colleague in 1858; not a few of the senior Senator's friends realized the danger in the latter fact. To counterbalance it, political prizes of lesser value went to the north half of the State. This consideration was in mind in the nomination of Mr. Kirkwood for Governor in 1859.¹ In 1860 Dubuque had aspirants for senatorial honors who only needed a favorable slant of the beam to induce their announcement. A correspondent of *The Gate City*, writing from Des Moines, Dec. 26, 1859, significantly observes: "The Senatorial question seems superficially to excite but little attention here just now; but the portents of the times are that the vexed question of locality will be exhumed for the benefit of solicitous competitors."²

Appreciating the situation, Mr. Palmer became a candidate for State Printer. In the contest Senator Harlan's managers could not prudently promote the chances of either Mr. Teesdale or Mr. Howell, without arousing the resentment of the "North-state" partisans favoring Mr. Palmer. On the other hand neutrality is no less a rock of offense in politics—for those adversely affected are wont to suspect that it signifies either indifference or timidity, deadly offenses in the code of lay politicians—those who seek to attain or to hold high office and power must make return in kind to those humbler personages whose co-operation and votes are essential to their elevation and continuance in power. Somewhat of the importance and heat of the contest may be inferred from the reports of two observers. Another correspondent of *The Gate City*, "R" wrote January 6th that, "It is now thought that

¹Numbers of letters to Senator Harlan from 1858 to 1860 emphasize the considerations referred to above. *Autobiographical MSS.*

²*The Gate City*, December 31, 1859. The Correspondent signs himself "J. M. D."—probably the late J. M. Delaplaine at that time on the staff of *The Gate City*.

the great fight of the session will be about the State Printing."¹ Four days later when the caucus had been called for the nomination of the State Printer and the National Senator, Mr. Porter states: "The race for State Printer has become about as exciting as the competition for the post of would-be U. S. Senator."² Those familiar with maneuvers in party caucuses will appreciate the significance and the masterly tactics of Senator Harlan's friends in assenting to the postponement of the decision on the matter of the State Printer until January 24th. The cast of the votes when taken gave Mr. Palmer the prize.

In sundry perplexities of this sort and in the highly unstable conditions outlined, we may well suspect that there was more truth than partisan presumption and persiflage in the assertions of Mr. Will Porter, the Democratic editor of *The State Journal* at Des Moines. He declared that Mr. Harlan's friends were "anxious and uneasy;" that "they were afraid of delay and hence they forced hasty action;"³ that there was much suppressed feeling and some "strong expressions of indignation;" that the Democrats asked for a reasonable delay but it was summarily denied. This urgency he asserts was due to the fact that a "particular friend of Senator Harlan, who has for several years held a position in the Senate received letters from prominent friends and perhaps from the Senator himself, urging an immediate caucus and speedy re-election—their purport was: 'delays are dangerous.' " In the course of his comments Mr. Porter throws out a suggestion that although tinged with ironical concern for an unbiased expression of the general sentiments of Republicans on the senatorship, no doubt reflected much of the current comment in the hotel lobbies:

The question is, why this haste? The Republican party have a clear and positive majority, which could not be affected by any of the ordinary casualties to which Legislators are subject. Next Wednesday, the 18th, the Republican State Convention comes off, which will be fresh from the people of that party throughout the State. They might have given to the various Republican Senators

¹*Ib.*, January 11, 1860. "R" was probably Mr. Wm. Richards, then Business Manager of *The Gate City*.

²*The Daily Iowa State Journal*, January 10, 1860.

³*Ib.*, January 14, 1860.

and Representatives some counsels direct and healthy from their constituents, as to the general wishes of the party throughout the State, uncorrupted by any machinations so rife at the Capitol.

In this re-election the Republican organization has been shaken to its foundation.¹

Shrewd as were some of the political leaders foremost in the Republican party of Iowa in 1859-1860, it would be strange indeed if there were not senatorial politics in the fringes of the decision fixing the date of the special state convention to select the delegates to the national Republican convention to nominate their candidate for President. The conditions on the eve of the assembly of the delegates certainly afforded a situation for a free-for-all contest if by some disturbance the dogs of factions had been set upon each other.

(b) Sundry Editorial Expressions.

The near approach of the special convention to select the delegates to go to the national Republican convention elicited no more editorial expressions in the party press of the State respecting its work or the wisdom of various modes of procedure than did the call for the convention in the forepart of December. One finds no advice, no comment in the columns of Messrs. Aldrich, Drummond, Dunham, Howell, Jerome, Junkin, Mahin, Norris, Rich, Sanders and Teesdale. One must look sharply to discover even in their columns devoted to local news any mention of the caucuses or county conventions that selected the county delegates to attend at Des Moines. Such lack of expression did not necessarily imply indifference respecting the presidential contest or languid interest on the part of their readers. It may have been due to wise discretion and prudence. The attendance at the convention demonstrated that public or party interest was not dormant or halting. Two influential editors express their feelings—each in different ways and their observations are worth noting.

¹*Ib.*, January 16, 1860.

So far as the writer can discover Mr. A. J. Stevens, a banker of Des Moines, then the member of the national Republican committee for Iowa was the only candidate for Senator Harlan's place publicly mentioned (Capitol Corr., *Muscatine Journal*, January 11, 1860). Mr. Harlan's friends sent him many letters informing him of talk of the candidacy of Messrs. Jacob Butler of Muscatine, John A. Kasson, and George G. Wright of Des Moines, and of Fitz Henry Warren of Burlington. *Autobiographical MSS.*, pp. 3185-3583.

We have already seen the cautious, conservative comments of Mr. Henry P. Scholte of *The Pella Gazette* when the call for the convention was first published. On January 4th, referring generally to the work of the national convention he says particularly of candidates for its nomination: "We have certainly our personal preferences; but we have abstained to forestall our state and national conventions. Should our state convention deem it necessary to instruct our delegates for whom to give their first vote, well and good; but should that convention deem it better to give no decisive instructions in that regard, we shall, with good humor, sustain the men who shall be designated. . . ." The sentiment which Mr. Scholte expressed reiterates the views of the majority of the experienced editors of the State, put forth in their columns in 1859. Party government, like government at large, in a republic like ours is posited upon responsible leadership. The masses, or the constituents indicate their general desire and will in the large but seldom undertake to direct specifically as to the modes of realization either in respect of men or measures. To their leaders in council they delegate the power to decide, believing that a few selectmen free to act as conditions make expedient, will insure better counsels and wiser decisions than many men of many minds acting indiscriminately and ill-advisedly.

One hundred miles north of Pella, at Charles City in Floyd county, not far south of the Minnesota line, a new note was sounded—struck by one, too, who previously had been cautious and conservative in expression and suggestion. Mr. Hildreth in the forepart of 1859, indicated a favorable attitude towards the candidacy of Judge Bates, and an adverse disposition towards that of Senator Seward, for the reason largely that the latter was so generally proclaimed a radical, and reckless extremist upon the subject of Slavery. A decided change in the temperature and drift of public discussion followed John Brown's raid and the publication of Helper's *Impending Crisis*. The leaders of the South were infuriated and their denunciation of the abettors and comforters of Brown and Helper was bitter and scathing. Accusations of

conspiracy, "lawlessness" and treason hurtled through the council chambers at Washington—not vague hints and sly innuendo but personal mention, bald, direct, brutal. The members of the major party of the North were called indiscriminately "Abolitionists," a term of utter contempt in the mouths of Southerners and so considered by Northerners. The heaviest, sharpest missiles of the speeches of the Slavocrats were aimed at one man on whose shoulders they laid the responsibility for Abolitionism, which was manifest to them in "nigger stealing," underground railways, open defiance of the Fugitive Slave law, all of which had its fruition in John Brown, whose execution for high treason, flagrant and undenied, was publicly mourned in the North. That man they deemed the spokesman of the North and the protagonists of the South declared with but little reserve, that disunion by secession would ensue if he should be made President. The change and concentration in political discussion produced a revulsion of feeling in Mr. Hildreth and a decision not infrequent in strong natures normally inclined to conservative courses when long subject to direct and increasing malevolence. Considerateness in conduct, caution, grace and patience under such circumstances, are taken by the provoking party as evidence of weakness or as the shifts and finesse of hostile design. While with the one provoked, patience ceases to be a virtue, caution seems ill-advised, and he suddenly takes up the gauntlet thrown at his feet, for a fight seems demanded and a fight he will give and squarely on the main issue. Mr. Hildreth, exasperated beyond endurance, gave expression on January 12th to his intense feelings in an editorial that is instructive for more than one reason and it is given at length. Its declarations will indicate with decisive clearness the high voltage of the electricity with which the atmosphere of political debate in Iowa was surcharged, when the chiefs of the clans of the Republican party first met in 1860 to decide upon their course in the Chicago convention:

We notice that some of the papers in the Southern part of the State, are out in favor of Simon Cameron, of Pennsylvania, as a Republican candidate for the Presidency. That Cameron is an as-

piring man we have known for a long time, and we have no doubt that he and his agents are busy in "fixing the flints" of the Western press—in other words, moulding a Western public opinion in his favor. But, gentlemen, Editors of Iowa, this will not do. The antecedents of Simon Cameron are not satisfactory. Such times as these demand a *representative* man for a Presidential candidate of the Republican party. The doctrine of *availability* has been practiced upon by both the great leading political parties, until the nation, both in character and finance, has been brought upon the brink of ruin.

We believe that the Republicans will be able to elect whoever they may nominate for President. Then throw aside "availability" and give us a *positive* man—one whose history and principles are well known and are thoroughly tried—a man who may be fully regarded as the *embodiment* of the principles and the measures of the party. That man is unquestionably William H. Seward.

Does the reader ask our reasons for this opinion—we answer: The slavery propagandists—now the Democratic party—have made the selection for us. It is around Seward's unoffending head that all their wrath is concentrated. So much do they hate and fear him that they are continually threatening a dissolution of the Union should Republicans *dare* to exercise their rights under the Constitution and elect him for President.

Our former predilections were for Edward Bates of Missouri, as a Western man and a man representing our sentiments. Our "available" man was John C. Fremont, a man who will draw more votes than any other one the Republicans can put in nomination. But our *positive* man is William H. Seward, and believing that the Republicans can elect any man they may nominate, we go for Seward, heart and soul.

Six months ago it was difficult to tell who would or who should be the Republican candidate for President, but not so now. As said before, the Southern press and Southern leaders have made proclamations—and indeed it is their one continual howl—that if the free-men of the North dare to disregard their impudent dictation, and elect to the Presidency, William H. Seward, they will secede from or destroy the Union, and smash up things generally. In our opinion this settles the question for us.

Thus threatened and bullied, men who never preferred Seward to other well-known and long-tried Republicans for the Presidency, have now but one fixed and unalterable determination in regard to who shall be their Standard-Bearer in 1860. They intend to prove that they not only clearly understand their constitutional rights and privileges, but that they have the necessary nerve to maintain them. They will not threaten or bully or play the brag-

gadocio. All that they leave to the men who quailed before old John Brown and his seventeen miserable Abolitionists, and who have been marching troops up and down the country to frighten away the shadow of a danger which had no substance, save in their cowardly apprehensions, and the absence of all self-reliance in the hour of danger. They intend to vindicate their self-respect, to show their estimate of bullying threats, by electing to the Presidency the very man the South would ostracize. They will then leave to him and his co-administrators of the Government the punishment of treason whenever and wherever it dares to exhibit itself. And they have no fears for the result. Barking dogs rarely bite; and when they do, are certain to be punished for having mistaken their vocation.

We can tell our pro-slavery friends, and they had better believe it, that if any portion of this great confederacy whether it be the East or the West, the North or the South, attempts to withdraw from the Union, they will be promptly *whipped*—aye, *whipped* into subjection. It is all idle to mince the matter. The fiat has gone forth and will be enforced; let Washington, Oregon and California, at the Northwest, or Maine, New Hampshire and Massachusetts, at the Northeast or the Agricultural States of the North and Center, or the slave States of the South and the Southwest—let any one of them or any combination of them raise the banner of rebellion against the American Union—we care not what their pretence for treason—as certainly as there is a God above, so certain is it, that the offending States, will be *whipped* into obedience, and the traitors who encouraged rebellion, terminate their career upon the gallows.¹

Sundry facts in connection with the foregoing editorial may well be noted before passing on to later phases. In the first place its significance is enhanced when we consider that the writer was not a Harry Hotspur as was Mr. Thomas Drummond of *The Eagle* of Vinton, nor a radical of the type of Mr. John Mahin of *The Journal* of Muscatine. He was a cool, deliberate “down east” Yankee who had had twenty years of experience as an editor in Vermont and Massachusetts. Further, at the time he wrote the lines, he was a member of the most potent body in the state government of Iowa, the Board of Education, that under a special clause of the constitution had plenary powers of legislation, supervision, control and adjudication in the finance and administration of the entire educational system of the State, of the common, secondary and the highest state schools.

¹*St. Charles Intelligencer*, Jan. 12, 1860.

Mr. Hildreth, it is clear, looked upon the movement for the nomination of Senator Cameron of Pennsylvania with some concern, evidently considering it to be gathering decided headway. He, no less than other editors who have been quoted, appreciated the strategic importance of securing the electoral vote of the Keystone state. But considerations of expediency lumped together under the catch word "availability" were not sufficient to warrant the nomination of the Pennsylvanian at Chicago. He was a shrewd and successful politician, an artful and skilled tactician in the organization and direction of party workers in political campaigns and field maneuvers, in the working and control of the "machine" as we put it nowadays. But neither his character nor his career symbolized the dominant opinion, or, perhaps better, the determining opinion on the major issue uppermost in the public mind—to-wit, Slavery. On this issue the entire public was intensely alive. Its consideration could neither be avoided nor hedged against by party leaders, much as they might wish to do so; and their candidate for the Presidency must needs be satisfactory to the mass of the Republicans in the reliable states as well as to those in the doubtful states. Senator Cameron, whether justly or not, had a reputation that made voters concerned only with the evils of public life, and not at all with the game and methods of politics, extremely suspicious; and however agreeable he might be to the politicians of Pennsylvania, his nomination at Chicago would neither secure the faith nor arouse the enthusiasm of Republicans, let alone win new adherents to the party's standards.

The most striking facts in Mr. Hildreth's editorials are his acceptance of the threats of Secession by the Southern Fire-eaters as deliberate and serious, and his definite and solemn defiance to the promoters of Disunion. Secession had been the bogie of political discussion for many years. In the Fremont campaign in 1856 threats of Disunion were boldly and freely made, but at the North they were generally discounted and ridiculed as "idle talk" and "silly nonsense."¹ The *emeute* at Harper's Ferry and Helper's *Impending Crisis*,

¹Von Holst, *Constitutional and Political History of the United States*, V, 247-251.

and the deadlock over the Speakership in Congress, caused a renewal of such threats. "The Capitol resounds with the cries of dissolution," wrote Senator Grimes to Mrs. Grimes, "and the cry is echoed throughout the city."¹ But again the leaders and the press of the Republican party regarded, or at least proclaimed the seditious utterances as partisan tricks—"a game for the Presidency" wrote Thurlow Weed; "an audacious humbug," declared Greeley's *Tribune*;² and Senator Grimes deemed them designed "simply to coerce, to frighten the Republicans."³ Throughout 1860 Republicans commonly derided the minatory language of Southerners, although Mr. Rhodes gives us grounds for his suggestion that their scoffing was mainly for party purposes.⁴ A fact significant of this conclusion—although by no means necessarily so—was the general contempt heaped upon the participants in the "Union-saving Meetings" and programs promoted during the period here considered. The Republican editors of Iowa, as in the older states to the east, regarded such proceedings as nefarious and designed to weaken the strength of their party.⁵ The utter unpreparedness of the North for the catastrophe when the storm broke in 1861, and the tremendous shock and rebound universally witnessed, indicates pretty conclusively that Mr. Hildreth's serious consideration of the "strong talk" of the Slavocrats was not common. How common Mr. Hildreth's feelings were in Iowa at that time we can not now determine; but we have already noted the defiance of another cool conservative editor, Mr. Howell. In June, 1858, to the treasonable declarations of *The Crescent* of New Orleans, he replied, "all such fanatics as *The Crescent* . . . will be driven like dogs to their kennels or hung by

¹Salter's *Life of Jas. W. Grimes*, 121.

²Von Holst, *ib.*, VII, 230-240. ³Salter, *ib.*, 122.

⁴Rhodes, *History of the United States*, 11, 488.

⁵*The Daily Muscatine Journal*, December 28, 1859. See editorial on "The Union Saving Farce."

the wayside as a warning to traitors," should they attempt secession on the election of a Republican President.¹

Normally we should expect to find vigorous language of this sort in the columns of Mr. John Mahin's *Journal* at Muscatine, but for the most part he was silent, at least so far as extended slashing editorials go. On January 12th, in contrasting the character of Charleston and Chicago as convention cities and the spirit and purposes of the men who would assemble in them to represent the two great parties to decide on their national platforms and candidates, Mr. Mahin uses some firm language:

. . . all the loud and excited talk of the fire eaters, and the whining of the dirt eaters—the two classes which compose the Democratic party will have no other effect than to strengthen their determination [of the Republicans] to take the administration of the affairs of the country out of the hands of the unscrupulous demagogues who are now at the helm. The Republican party holds that slavery should be restricted to its present limits, and upon this issue it will receive the hearty support of a large class at the South, who believe that slavery operates against the welfare of the States in which it at present exists. Republicans are determined to preserve the Union against the threats and acts of disunionists everywhere; and, as we said, the convention at Chicago will bind together in an invincible phalanx, good and true men, at the North and South, for the election of a president upon these grounds. Abuses, of course, will be heaped upon the party by the "Democratic" press and "Democratic" orators, but the people cannot be deceived by any such stuff. They have not forgotten that the fathers of the Republic occupied the identical position upon the Slavery question that the Republican party now occupies and their decision at the ballot box in November, will be their answer to the "Democratic" argument of the campaign, from which, if not satisfactory to them, they cannot appeal.

Mr. Howell of *The Gate City* had no advice to offer the delegates to the state convention, but on January 11th he placed before his readers the name of a candidate for the presidential nomination not heretofore mentioned, but not a name unknown. As was his wont he did so "without prejudice," being completely non-committal as to his own feelings for or against the candidate and his consideration. He said:

¹*The Gate City*, June 30, 1858.

Mr. Howell, reciting similar threats in the presidential campaign of 1828, in the event of the election of J. Q. Adams, and again during the speakership contest when N. P. Banks was a candidate, observed on the current threats: "The Disunion game is an old game. It is played on purpose to 'gull' the flats' and so long as the 'flats' exist they expect to be successful. Whether the game is played out or not is a thing to be proved." (*The Gate City*, December 26, 1859.) Two weeks later he reproves Democratic editors for not denouncing the suggestion that Disunion would be beneficial to the South. (*Ib.*, January 9, 1860.)

The friends of Mr. Dayton have issued a circular to promote his nomination to the Presidency. They say that full conferences have established the fact that he would receive the vote of the united opposition in New Jersey and be certain to carry the State; and they feel confident that the same elements of popularity, the same antecedents and the same general state of things politically in Pennsylvania that prevail in New Jersey would enable him to carry that state.

Mr. Dunham's comment in *The Hawk-Eye* (Jan. 10th) on the claim of Mr. Dayton's promoters that his popularity in New Jersey and Pennsylvania would carry those states for the Republicans was somewhat critical: ". . . the fact that he failed to do so as a candidate for Vice-President in 1856 is not satisfactorily reconciled with this assumption. Mr. Dayton is an eminently conservative man with Whig antecedents and would make a good president if elected." Such comment indicates adverse inclinations but it is so cushioned with commendation that the critic is not embarrassed if the fates decide in the candidate's favor.

The writer has discovered but one editorial specifically urging the nomination of a particular candidate in the fore part of January. Mr. Orlando McCraney, editor of *The Weekly McGregor Press*, declared himself again in favor of the nomination of Judge Bates. A portion of his editorial succeeds:

The time is now drawing near when the candidates of the different parties and interests for their responsible positions are to be brought forward. The political sentiment of the country never before was in so unsettled a condition as today, and but few men in the North at least, are prepared to pledge fidelity to any particular party. The conservative Republican element, we think, will predominate, and the opposition will fall into line.....

We are but one of the millions interested in this great political movement, yet we claim the right to be heard. Our vote and our influence will be extended in behalf of the nomination of Edward Bates of Missouri, as the candidate of the people, believing, as we do, that he is not only one of the best, most talented, able and liberal men of the day, but that he is a man who is closely identified with the interest of our portion of the Union. That he will be the friend of the pioneer—that he will exert his influence in opening to commerce our vast west, and giving life and zeal to emigration.

Edward Bates is also our choice on account of availability. We regard him as one of the most popular men of the day and acceptable alike to the North and South, East and West. He has been called forward not by a life spent in demagogism but by his fellow countrymen, and if the honors and responsibilities of that office are conferred upon him, it will be unasked for and unsolicited by him. He will come into office untrammelled by fealty to party or persons. He will be free to act according to the convictions of his own mind and will make the people an able and worthy president.

Mr. Dunham reprints the foregoing without comment.¹

The significance of surface phenomena in the currents of politics is always difficult to apprehend; just as it is difficult to perceive the purport of eddies and swirls in the currents of our rivers. The following extract from a letter written to *The Gate City* and dated at New York City, Jan. 7, 1860, is not without interest:

At a social meeting, by invitation, at a private house, one evening this week, where some twenty republicans of the city were present, together with General Pomeroy of Kansas, Gen. Reid, Mayor Leighton, Wm. S. McGavie, D. W. Kilbourne, of Keokuk, Attorney-General Rice of Oskaloosa, and Jacob Butler, Esq., of Muscatine, there was a decided preference expressed by most of [the] party (except the Iowa gentleman) for Chase of Ohio. Seward, Chase, Bates, Cameron, and Wade seem to be the most prominent at the present time.²

The adverse attitude of so many different Iowans from widely separate sections of the southern half of the State towards the candidacy of Gov. Chase is suggestive. All of the men mentioned were ardent Republicans. Mr. Butler, in particular, was an Abolitionist of a pronounced type. Gov. Chase's record as an anti-slavery man could not be gainsaid except by extremists of the most violent sort. Such disinclination in respect of his nomination must have signified a common belief that he could not be elected if nominated.

(c) Some of the County Preliminaries.

The local preliminaries incident to the selection of the delegates to attend the state convention at Des Moines aroused but little public interest if we should conclude from the reports

¹*The Hawk-Eye* (wk.), Jan. 21, 1860.

²*The Gate City*, Jan. 18, 1860.

thereof in the party press of the State. One experiences difficulty in discovering calls or notices of local caucuses or primaries or county conventions. There is little space given to their proceedings; and almost no comment thereon. A few details are discoverable, some of which are instructive, for they suggest the major currents that were constantly running beneath the surface.

The selection of the delegates for Dubuque county elicited a brief note in *The Dubuque Herald*. Among the delegates chosen were Judge W. T. Hamilton, Wm. B. Allison and D. N. Cooley. Two other names, Messrs. Francis Mangold and H. W. Richter, suggest the "recognition" of the German-American element in that community¹. At Davenport the party leaders were careful to attend to the nativity of the delegates, if we may believe the classification of *The Davenport Democrat*. Of the twelve delegates—five were *Germans*, N. J. Rusch, G. G. Arndt, L. Schrieker, H. Ramming, and H. L. Lischer; three were *Irishmen*, James Quinn, B. F. Guy and Alfred Sanders; and five were *Americans*, John W. Thompson, Wm. Henry Fitz, Hugh Gurley, Geo. W. Ells, and Chas. Foster. To some sarcastic suggestion of *The Democrat*, the "administration" organ at Davenport, anent the nationalities Mr. Mahin at Muscatine, retorted: "Well, what of it, Mr. Democrat? Are you such an out-and-out Know-Nothing as to complain because eight of these delegates are foreigners and only five are natives?"² Farther down the river at Burlington the delegates were chosen apparently without fuss. Two names—Messrs. C. W. Bodeman and T. B. Webber—again indicate that sons of Germania were numerous enough to be reckoned with and hence were entitled to representation in the party's councils. Three state notables appear in the lists—Mr. Chas. Ben Darwin, chairman of the Code Commission that was then about to submit its draft of the Code of 1860 to the Legislature, Judge L. D. Stockton, then one of the Justices of the Supreme Court of Iowa, and Mr. Fitz Henry Warren, of whom more later. The convention or the "meeting" voted that the "Central committee [of Des

¹*The Dubuque Herald*, December 29, 1859.

²*The Daily Muscatine Journal*, January 6, 1860.

Moines county?] fill the vacancies in the delegation should any occur."¹ Mr. Dunham makes no editorial reference in *The Hawk-Eye* to the convention, nor to the delegates nor to the approaching state convention. The state convention seems to have had no special interest to the editors of *The Gate City*. Mr. Howell was chairman of the county central committee and issued (Dec. 16) the call for the county convention to assemble at Charleston, in Lee county (Dec. 31); but although he and his business manager were generally interested in the final result one finds no reference to the proceedings. In Wapello county, and in Ottumwa the convention took no action that attracted special interest except to specify by resolution as to the manner of casting the vote if some of the delegates should fail to attend at Des Moines.² Mr. Teesdale's paper related the proceedings of the convention of Polk county in two inches of space.³

We have already seen that the Republicans of Fremont county instructed their delegates to Des Moines to work for the nomination of Justice John McLean for President and Judge Edward Bates for Vice-President.⁴ And that the local caucus at Newton directed their representatives in the county convention of Jasper county to seek to secure the nomination of Salmon P. Chase and of Abraham Lincoln for first and second places on the national ticket.⁵ Whether any like action was taken or opposed at the ensuing convention the writer can not say. The Republicans of Black Hawk county apparently were composed of some lusty radicals for they directed their delegates "to use their influence at the state convention for delegates to the national convention who are in favor of the nomination of Wm. H. Seward or Charles Sumner as the Republican candidate for President."⁶ Instructions such as these make ardent partisans and insistent promoters of candidates groan in spirit and, if they dare, indulge in strong language.

¹*The Burlington Hawk-Eye*, January 2, 1860.

²*The Weekly Ottumwa Courier*, January 5, 1860.

³*Daily State Register*, January 9, 1860.

⁴*Ib.*, January 13, 1860.

⁵*The Gate City*, January 11, 1860.

⁶*The Black Hawk Courier*, January 3, 1860.

Here and there the waters surged up vigorously and white caps were observable. The turmoil at Washington had its reaction in some of the county conventions. The Republicans of Grundy county felt strongly and gave expression to their feelings upon the course of affairs at the national capital. Their resolutions were pointed and pithy:

Resolved, That the Republicans of Grundy county approve of the determined stand our Representatives in Congress have taken in the election of Speaker, believing as we do, that those who recommend Helper's Book are safer men than avowed disunionists.

Resolved, That we are in favor of the Union, inasmuch as we have prospered under it, and as we see no good cause for abandoning it, we will stay in it, and we will make all others stay in it, or do as General Jackson would have done, hang all who attempt to get out of it.¹

The names of only two Iowans appeared among the endorsers of Helper's book, Mr. Timothy Davis of Dubuque, Congressman from Iowa from 1857-59, and Col. S. R. Curtis, then in Congress.² The Republican central committee of Muscatine county deemed the urgency of public questions so great that they made special mention of the fact when they published (Dec. 8) their "request" of the Republicans to meet in "Mass Convention" on January 7th, at the county courthouse; thus concluding:

We respectfully suggest that there be on this occasion a general attendance from all parts of the county, to give an authoritative expression to the sentiments of the Republicans of this county upon the exciting questions now agitating the country, and of their preferences as to the manner of conducting the coming campaign.

The chairman of the committee signing the foregoing was Mr. Hugh J. Campbell, who was then manifesting the energy and decisiveness of character that made his subsequent career influential in Louisiana and the Dakotas.³ The convention

¹*The Daily State Register*, February 2, 1860.

²*Cong. Globe*, 31 Cong., 1st Sess., Vol. I-16.

³He became a Brigadier-General by brevet on being mustered out of the Union army at the close of the war. Later he was appointed federal judge in Louisiana. While in that State he achieved fame or infamy as a member of the election board in the electoral contest in 1876-77. He gave his decision in favor of the Republican presidential electors, thereby insuring the election of President Hayes. Afterwards he moved to the Territory of Dakota where he served for years as District Attorney. His activities on behalf of statehood for the present Dakotas gained him the sobriquet of "Father of Statehood." *Appleton's Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, VII, 47.

occurred as scheduled with a number of prominent party chiefs in attendance. Judge George Meason presided. Mr. Geo. H. Van Horne was made Secretary. Later he was appointed Consul at Marseilles by President Lincoln, and had a creditable career as a journalist, lecturer and writer. The convention transacted its main business apparently without friction, choosing an exceptionally strong delegation, eight in number, to attend at Des Moines. Among the delegates was Mr. D. C. Cloud, Iowa's first Attorney-General (1853-1856). The course of the Democratic party in Kansas forced him to abandon that party. He was later the author of several books of considerable local currency.¹ Mr. Suel Foster, a noted pioneer horticulturist to whom chief credit is given for creating the demand that led to the establishing of the Agricultural College at Ames² was a delegate, as were Mr. Jacob Butler, Mr. John Mahin and Mr. Henry O'Connor. The meeting discussed at some length methods for "more effective organization" in conducting the campaign. A committee was appointed, consisting of L. H. Washburn, Jerome Carskadden and Hugh J. Campbell. The minutes subsequently report that "on motion of Hugh J. Campbell, Esq., the work entitled 'Helper's Impending Crisis' is recommended by this committee as a book worthy of an extensive circulation in this county." Whereupon the convention adjourned.

The recommendation of Helper's book made Mr. D. S. Biles, editor of *The Democratic Enquirer* of Muscatine, fulminate mightily. The resolution of the convention, together with sundry extracts of striking passages from the *Impending Crisis* were reprinted by him, under the caption in bold black type "The Republican Platform." He reproduced a half column or more thereof in nearly every issue from Jan. 12 to Feb. 23. He made the action of the Republicans of Muscatine notorious and aroused no little public interest, for a special correspondent of *The New York Herald*, then travel-

¹Gue, *History of Iowa*, IV, 55. His chief books were *The War Powers of the President* and *Monopolies and the People*.

²*Ib.*, IV, 94, 95.

ing in the Northwest, devoted considerable space to the fact as indicative of the overwhelming abolition sentiment among the Republicans of Iowa; he declared it to be the first public endorsement of the book anywhere in the North.¹

(d) Senator Harlan's Confidential Advices.

The public utterances of political leaders and their confidential expressions *inter se* are not always coincident. Such divergences as we may discern are seldom due to moral delinquency but to the fact that in public, politicians assert what they hope for in the large, and are striving to bring to pass, or express what they deem most prudent and effective for their purposes. In the confidences of personal interviews or correspondence, however, they exhibit their hopes and fears, their desires and plans, frankly and freely—or at least more so. Subjects as to which they maintain a severe silence in their editorial columns or on the platform, they deal with plumply within the family circle. Thus it was in the preliminaries of the presidential campaign in 1860 in Iowa. The major currents of opinion among Republicans on both issues and candidates were not clearly discernable on the surface, when the party chiefs convened at Des Moines to make their first decision as to their course in the contest. The expressions of editors were rare and in general terms when ventured; but the conclusion does not follow that party chiefs and local leaders were not keenly interested and alive to the momentous matters then in the balances.

In state politics there are, as already intimated, two chief centers that receive the voluminous currents of party advices. The substance of advices, information and appeals, return in cautious inquiry and deft suggestion, sometimes in direct and urgent decisions. These centers are the State's national senators. These party chiefs correlate local and national opinion. Their views are the issue of currents constantly flowing into Washington from their constituents, modified by their appreciation of advices received from their associates in Wash-

¹N. Y. *Herald*, February 19, 1860. The comments referred to were quoted by the writer, *ANNALS*, VIII, 194.

ington from other states. We have already seen the letter of Senator Grimes to Governor-elect Kirkwood, written December 26, 1859. As Iowa's junior Senator was in constant correspondence with his constituents his advice was doubtless in part a reflection of his local advices. Unfortunately the contents of his letter files seem to be irrecoverably lost.¹ Senator Harlan's correspondence, however, has been preserved and it affords us interesting evidence of the drifts and shifts of local opinion in Iowa during the period here under consideration. Sundry portions of the correspondence are given in what follows.

Col. Alvin Saunders of Mt. Pleasant was Senator Harlan's *fidus Achates* and his major-general in his senatorial campaigns. From Springfield, Ill., once his home² where he was visiting he wrote (Nov. 8), relative to the presidential contest approaching: "If we succeed then we are all O. K., but if we fail then our cake is dough for at least a long time." James F. Wilson of Fairfield wrote (Dec. 19), "The threats of disunion now so boldly made sit heavily on the Democracy of the Northwest. . . . The cry raised over Helper's book is doing more towards its circulation than all the Republican committees could have done in years. Everybody wants to read its awful contents." Dr. Charles S. Clarke, a prominent physician of Fairfield (Dec. 22): . . . "I am as you well know an earnest Republican. I would not interfere with slavery in the states. I never did sympathize or act with the Abolition party and yet down South they would call me an Abolitionist.³ I know the Republican leaders of Iowa and elsewhere and I know that they are Union Republicans and are opposed to disunion Democrats and Abolitionists. Republicans in Iowa all condemn Brown's rash act but they do admire his bravery, truthfulness and fidelity to what he conscientiously deemed right."⁴

¹Senator Grimes' correspondence with the exception of a few letters was destroyed by the Executor of his estate by direction of Mrs. Grimes.—Miss Mary D. Nealley to the writer, Sept. 20, 1909.

²Colonel Saunder's brother, Pressley, was a member of Abraham Lincoln's regiment in the Black Hawk War.

³Dr. Clarke lived for some time in Kentucky.

⁴In a letter to Senator H., October 30th, Dr. Clarke said: "No good citizen justifies Brown, no good citizen excuses Pierce, Buchanan & Co. On them this evil rests."

Not all of Senator Harlan's correspondents discussed affairs at large; some wished to promote the general welfare by his advancement; thus Mr. J. B. Young, a leading attorney of Marion, in Linn county, expressed a hope (Dec. 27) "I would rejoice to see my old friend . . . the candidate for Vice-President," a wish that was later declared publicly by another friend in an adjoining county.

Another attorney, Mr. J. F. Brown of Eldora in Hardin county, communicated his views upon the presidential question (Dec. 28): "I hope that W. H. Seward will be nominated *if he can be elected*. He above all others is my Man." The Secretary of State, Mr. Elijah Sells, notified him (Dec. 29) that the "Third House" of the General Assembly and the Chicago, Iowa and Nebraska Railroad Company were "conspiring" to secure a diversion of the land grant to the Iowa Central Air line to a new company. Mr. John W. Rankin, the state senator from Lee county, the law partner of Samuel F. Miller, wrote him (Jan. 14, 1860): "Give my best wishes to Gov. Grimes, also to Gen. Cameron, the next President of the United States. This is no prophecy, but the truth ahead of time." On the same date Mr. Robert Gower of Gower's Ferry, in Cedar county, gave him a report of local opinion on the presidential succession and expressed his own views as to a desirable nominee:

People are beginning to discuss the subject of our next President. I expect our State by their convention on the 18th inst. will decide their preference for Republican nominee. I have heard urged by delegates to that convention, General Cameron, General Fessenden and Judge McLean. Before the 13th of June I would be glad of your choice.

The expressions which succeed are taken from two letters written in Des Moines on the eve of the state convention, by delegates thereto. Both writers had state wide reputations and influence. The first was a brilliant orator and effective campaigner. The second was an experienced party worker, alert and shrewd, who had been a close observer of political conditions in southern sections of the State from the time Iowa

was a part of the territory of Wisconsin. Mr. Henry O'Connor of Muscatine, on January 15th wrote Senator Harlan of presidential politics as follows:

. . . Our convention which meets next Wednesday will be largely attended and we anticipate a good time. Everybody is a candidate for delegate to the Chicago Convention so that we will be at no loss for timber. I am entirely indifferent providing they will only send a delegation that will comport with the dignified and decided Republican character of Iowa. I think Iowa may be set down now as decidedly Republican in sentiment and action. There is a good deal of talk and speculation about Presidential candidates, one element which seems to be entering into this coming Presidential contest already, I never liked and like it now less than ever, that is the *availability* element. It's a sheer humbug. We as a party have strength enough if we only have integrity, we can and ought to select our best man, the representative man of our party. I have but one candidate myself, although I expect to vote and work for whoever is nominated. If my vote could make a president today it would be given to Wm. H. Seward in preference to any man now living. I believe he can be—I know he ought to be President.

The next day (Jan. 16) Mr. Hawkins Taylor of Keokuk communicated his observations on the same subject:

. . . Our State Convention comes off Wednesday for the appointment of delegates to the Chicago Convention. There is a good many candidates for delegates. Who will be appointed it is hard to tell now. I am in favor of the appointment of two to each Judicial district and then let them cast the vote the state is entitled to which ought to be 16 or 18. There is no disposition to instruct our delegates, still I think that the general feeling is in favor of Cameron and Lincoln or Lincoln and Grow. It is universally conceded that Pennsylvania must be carried and the question is who can do it. I have never heard anyone say that they believed that Seward or Chase could. And I am well satisfied that neither of them can carry Iowa against Douglas or any popular Northern Doughface. I have spent the fall and winter buying hogs in the two Southern Tier of counties west of the Des Moines and I tell you there is *no Seward or Chase men there*. The Republicans of that section are more like the Opposition of Missouri.

I confess I am not over sanguine of success next fall. We have men that can be elected *but we can not elect anybody*. You must recollect that the mass of the voters don't read political documents and consequently do not get excited and have great aversion to

voting for any man I should like to hear your views on the subject of the next Presidential Candidate. How does Forney feel? Could he be got to support Seward or Chase?

Various facts in the foregoing may well be noted before passing on. Senator Harlan's correspondents declare John Brown's raid into Virginia reprehensible, even though they may express some sympathy with the man's trials or admiration of his character. Again of like import, Abolitionism is anathema. Those who mention the presidential succession fall into two classes: the friends of particular candidates and the advocates of no particular candidate, save the man who can poll the most votes for the party's cause. Those who urge Gov. Seward, while earnest in their admiration of the man, nevertheless feel doubts as to his chances of winning in the election. Doing and dying with a favorite champion may be heroic; but if defeat is the result your cake will become dough. The cause of their hesitation was the existence of oldtime and obstreperous prejudices in the minds of the southern folk in the State, who hated abolitionists with the same vigor that they hated slavery and would have none of either. Further, Mr. Taylor refers to Abraham Lincoln as a definite candidate, one who is to be reckoned with, precisely as Governors Chase or Seward, with an assurance that indicates that he did not deem the consideration of the Illinoisan unfamiliar to his party chief at Washington. Senator Harlan's contingent candidacy for national honors is suggested by two correspondents—a suggestion the realization of which was by no means violently improbable. Five of the correspondents just cited were chosen at the state convention, January 18th, to represent the Republicans of Iowa at the national convention at Chicago: Messrs. Brown of Eldora, O'Connor of Muscatine, Rankin of Keokuk, Saunders of Mt. Pleasant, and Wilson of Fairfield.

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